reserved by ones of said participants in different groups; and

a plurality of remote client devices operatively connected to said schedule server, which allow client users to input schedules of said participants and request an idle time retrieval from said schedule server, wherein a degree of significance is provided to said participants respectively so that schedules of said participants are grouped in the order of said degree of significance to thereby retrieve the idle time corresponding to said degree of significance among said different groups.

11. (Amended) A schedule management system, comprising:

a schedule server which stores schedules of participants and schedules of equipments reserved by ones of said participants in different groups; and

a plurality of remote client devices operatively connected to said schedule server, which allow client users to input schedules of said participants and request an idle time retrieval from said schedule server,

wherein said schedule server comprises one or more databases which store schedules of participants and schedules of equipments reserved by ones of said participants, and a multistageous idle time retrieval unit which divides schedules registered for participants and equipments into a plurality of groups and retrieves an idle time common from one group as a retrieval condition for retrieving an idle time common for another group of said plurality of groups.

~~**12. (Amended)** A schedule retrieval method for retrieving a schedule,~~

comprising:

accepting a first conference holding condition of said schedule;

dividing a subject of said schedule into a plurality of groups;

comparing one group in said plurality of groups obtained by division with said first conference-holding condition to make a coincident result be a second conference-holding condition;

comparing one of said plurality of groups, which is not yet compared with any previous conference-holding conditions, with said second conference-holding condition to obtain a retrieval result; and

outputting said retrieval result obtained .

13. (Amended) A schedule server apparatus coupled to terminal apparatuses allocated to schedule-reserving persons and schedule-reserved persons through a communication line for retrieving idle time of a schedule, comprising:

communication control means for transmitting data to said terminal apparatuses and for receiving data from said terminal apparatuses; and

retrieving means for dividing each of schedules registered for a plurality of participants and/or a plurality of equipments into a plurality of groups and retrieving common idle time among said plurality of groups while taking a degree of significance of respective groups of participants and/or equipments into account.

14. (Amended) A computer readable medium comprising instructions for

retrieving idle time of a schedule that, when executed by a computer system, perform the method comprising:

accepting a first conference-holding condition of said schedule;

dividing a subject of said schedule into a plurality of groups;

comparing one group in said plurality of groups obtained by division with said first conference-holding condition to make a coincident result be a second conference-holding condition;

comparing one of said plurality of groups, which is not yet compared with any previous conference-holding conditions, with said second conference-holding condition; and

outputting a retrieval result obtained by comparison.